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Rural Wealth and Welfare: Economic Principles Illustrated and Applied in Farm Life. By GEORGE T. FAIRCHILD, LL.D. (The Rural Science Series, edited by L. H. BAILEY). New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900. 12mo, pp. xiv + 381.
America's Working People. By CHARLES B. SPAHR. New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1900. 12mo, pp. viii + 261.

THE feeling of disappointment induced by a reading of *Rural Wealth and Welfare* may be due in part to too great expectations, growing out of the length of time which elapsed between the first announcement of the book and its actual appearance; but surely it is not unreasonable to expect a work with such a title to contain contributions to the literature of subjects of practical importance to farmers, such as agricultural depressions, farm labor, rotation and diversification of crops, reclamation of arid lands by irrigation, and intensive culture in general. Instead, we find an elementary treatise on general economics, with the special problems of the farm treated only incidentally at best, and with whole chapters devoid of anything bearing directly upon agriculture or upon rural welfare. Several chapters are devoted to exchange, currency, credit, and banking, but only paragraphs or sentences to such subjects as good roads, bonanza farms, agricultural insurance, and the like. And there is nothing original or strikingly well said about the economics of the volume, to reconcile the student of agriculture to the waste of time involved in reading it. The author has fallen hopelessly into the habit of stating his opinions and conclusions dogmatically, without any adequate basis of fact, and even without indicating his own mental processes. This habit is perhaps explained, though it is by no means excused, by the attempt to cover too much ground in one small volume.

The treatment of the law of diminishing returns as applied to agriculture, the only agricultural subject to which more than passing mention is accorded, is especially unsatisfactory, if not misleading. The important qualification "beyond a certain point" is ignored, and in its place appear the words "under usual conditions." ("In the cultivation of land an increased amount of effort under usual conditions fails to give a correspondingly increased amount of produce.") It may be noted in passing that this statement of the law leaves the application of capital to the land out of account. And the proof of the law is found "in the disposition of farmers to buy more land instead

of to increase labor upon a limited space possessed"—as if the intuition of farmers could be trusted to solve unerringly the most difficult unsettled problems in economics. The simple fact of the matter is that no one can tell whether American agriculture in general has or has not reached that certain point beyond which the law of diminishing returns begins to operate; but a recent investigation of the United States Department of Agriculture has shown that the point of diminishing returns has not been reached in cotton culture,¹ and there is good reason to believe that the same thing is true of other important crops, at least in some sections of the country. Whether the actual tendency at the present time is in the direction of larger farms is another very doubtful point which is taken for granted without proof. Dr. Fairchild's ill-considered teaching on this subject of diminishing returns ought not to be permitted to reach the public for which it is intended without protest, for it is a direct encouragement to shiftless farming.

The book contains some interesting suggestions about possible methods of co-operation in agriculture (in the widest sense of the word co-operation), but these might have been made much more interesting and valuable by telling something about actual experiments along the lines suggested. Almost the only concrete and tangible facts in the book are those exhibited in fourteen charts of ingenious but complicated graphic statistics. These are devoted mainly to agricultural products, but they are not so related to the main argument as to be really illustrative. By a more careful revision of his proofs the author might have avoided such misstatements as that in which tea is put in the free list.

DR. SPAHR'S book is much more of a contribution to our knowledge of rural welfare than is Dr. Fairchild's. The author considers the rural districts more typical of America than the cities, not only because they contain more people and a smaller proportion of foreigners, but also because "it is here that the immigrants are most thoroughly assimilated, and social institutions most completely dominated by the American spirit." "America," he says, "begins with the rural districts." He therefore apologizes for devoting half his chapters

¹ WATKINS, *The Cost of Cotton Production* (Division of Statistics, Miscellaneous Series, Bulletin No. 16), pp. 25-29, 64; GEORGE K. HOLMES, "Agricultural Production and Prices," *Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture*, 1897, pp. 597-599.

to manufacturing and mining towns and to the trades-union movement in Chicago. His method of investigation reminds the reader of Mr. Wyckoff's "experiment in reality;" for though he was not in disguise, he mingled freely with workingmen as well as with employers at every place he visited, and so was able to check the statements of both sides, and often to reconcile them or get them modified at the original sources when they disagreed. In some cases official publications were resorted to as a further test of accuracy, although Dr. Spahr always distrusts printed statistics as compared with actual observation. He found both employers and employed willing to answer his questions, but it was from the workingmen that he acquired new points of view and the facts which are not found in the newspapers. His travels extended from New England to Alabama and Utah, and included the coal and iron regions of Pennsylvania, some of the new factory towns of North Carolina and Georgia, the backwoods of Arkansas, and the farming districts of Minnesota. The result is a collection of sketches a shade less impressionistic than "*The Workers*," but forming on the whole a somewhat safer basis from which to generalize. Yet the contents of ten chapters describing such diverse conditions cannot well be summarized in a brief review, and it must suffice to call attention to two or three observations only.

Dr. Spahr was impressed more than once with the lowering of farm wages during recent years—much more so, in all probability, than he would have been if his inquiries had been made during the present summer. An Arkansas farmer testified that while he formerly paid \$18 or \$20 a month, he could now get a good man for \$10; and on the cotton plantations of the Black Belt wages had fallen in a few years from seventy-five cents a day to thirty or forty cents with rations costing about five cents a day—three and a half pounds of bacon and a quarter of a peck of meal each week. Moreover, these day wages stopped when work was stopped by bad weather, and wages by the month were only about twenty times thirty or forty cents. Even for a white man \$8 a month with board was considered a fair wage in northern Georgia: but board in the case of white hands is considered worth \$5 a month. Rural wages, however, as the author truly remarks, are hardly comparable with city wages; he estimates that \$400 in Jonesboro, Ark., will purchase more comfort than \$800 in an eastern city, and denies that the condition of labor generally has improved during the century as much as wages are reported to have risen,

because a century ago nearly all labor was rural. He found that everywhere those who were migrating to the towns were those who were too poor to be able to live in the country, or those too rich to be willing to live there; making the cities centers of both wealth and poverty, and leaving the farming districts the strongholds of the great middle classes.

It was on the northern farm that Dr. Spahr found the conditions most hopeful—not because of the 50 per cent. dividends paid by the co-operative dairies of Minnesota, nor even mainly because he believed the farm of moderate size to have certain economic advantages which would enable it to compete successfully with and even supersede the bonanza farm, but chiefly because he found the independent northern farm, worked for the most part by the owner and his family, giving men and women "the training in self-reliance and self-respect upon which the development of democracy rests."

MAX WEST.

Das Aufsteigen des Arbeiterstandes in England. Ein Beitrag zur sozialen Geschichte der Gegenwart. By HANS VON NOSTITZ. Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1900. 8vo, pp. xxiii + 808.

In the present work Mr. von Nostitz endeavors to bring together the various factors which have entered into the elevation of the laboring classes in England. Beginning with an historical account of labor and industrial conditions and the growing evils following the introduction of machinery and the development of manufactures in the early part of the nineteenth century, under the *laissez faire* policy, the author presents in turn each of the various influences which have tended to overcome these evils and have raised the English workingman to the high plane on which he stands today. As an historian he has taken up the various social movements individually and collectively and has traced them from their inception, through their various vicissitudes to the present time. As an economist he has sought to determine the causes for the conditions presented in the historical account, to measure the relative influence which each factor exerted in the upbuilding of the working classes, and to show the present condition and tendencies of the various phases of the social question in England.

The task of Mr. von Nostitz was an enormous one and gives evidence of earnest study and vast research. During a six months'